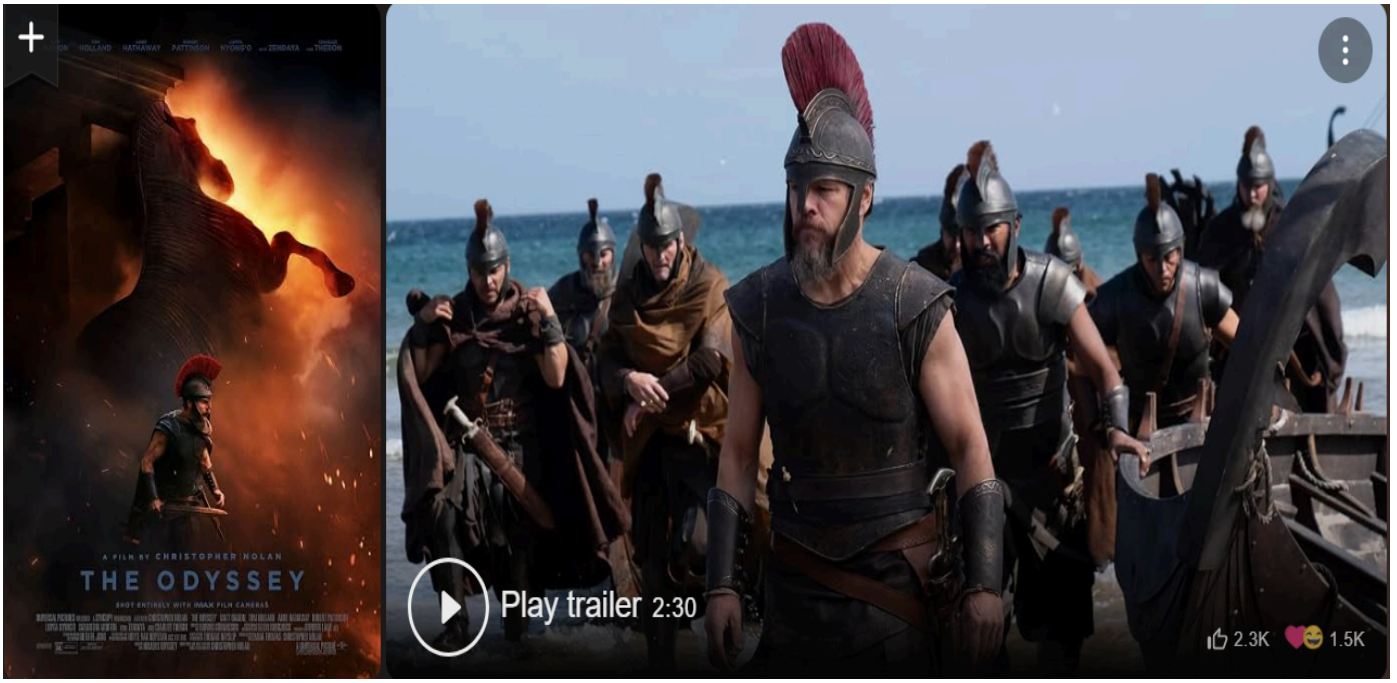

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The Odyssey as we have it is an epic of over twelve thousand lines. It has been divided, like the Iliad and probably at the same time, into twenty-four books. Book number and line number are the standard terms of reference. The contents can be, very broadly, divided as follows: The Telemachy or Adventures of Telemachos, i-iv The Homecoming of Odysseus, v-viii and xiii.1-187 The Great Wanderings, ix-xii Odysseus on Ithaka, xiii.187-xxiv.548. We can also distinguish a Proem, Book i.1-10, and an End of the Odyssey, all of Book xxiv. This division is for convenience; it is arbitrary and not water-tight, but gives us terms to work with. 1 I begin by summarizing the bare facts of the story. Odysseus spent ten years fighting at Troy, and another ten years getting home. During this time, none of his family knew what had happened to him, and he lost all his ships, all his men, and the spoils from Troy. After ten years, or in the tenth year, he was set down in his own country, alone and secretly, though with a new set of possessions, by the Phaiakians of Scheria, who were the last people he visited on his wanderings. When he took ship for Troy, Odysseus left behind his wife, Penelope, and his infant son, Telemachos. A few years before his return, the young bachelors of Odysseus' kingdom, Ithaka and the surrounding islands, began paying court to Penelope (ii.89-90). She was accomplished and clever, still beautiful, an heiress and presumably a widow; but she clung to the hope that Odysseus might come back, and held them off, without ever saying positively that she would never marry again. The suitors made themselves at home as uninvited guests in the palace of Odysseus. Shortly before the return of Odysseus, Telemachos visited the mainland in search of news about his father. He heard from Menelaos that Odysseus was alive but detained without means of return on the island of Kalypso (iv.555-560). Telemachos returned to Ithaka. The suitors set an ambush, meaning to murder him, but

he eluded them and reached Ithaka just after his father arrived. The voyage of Telemachos, the arrival of Odysseus, and the recognition and reunion of father and son, were all supervised by Athene. Father and son plotted the destruction of the suitors. Odysseus entered his own house unrecognized, mingled with the suitors and talked with Penelope. He and Telemachos contrived to catch them unarmed and with the help of two loyal serving men (and of course Athene) they slaughtered all 108 suitors. Penelope knew nothing of the plot; Odysseus revealed himself to her after the fighting was over. The relatives of the dead suitors attacked the heroes on the farm of Laertes, father of Odysseus, and a battle began, but it was ended by Zeus and Athene, who patched up a hasty reconciliation. THE TELEMACHY The Odyssey, like the Iliad, begins in the tenth year of the story's chief action, with events nearing their climax and final solution. We begin with a very rapid location of Odysseus in place, time, and stage in his career, but then (via the councils of the gods concerning his immediate fate) pass to Telemachos, with Athene's visit which sends him off on his journey. It is only after Telemachos has begun his visit in Sparta, and heard from Menelaos that his father is alive, and after the suitors have set their trap, that we return directly to Odysseus himself. We then follow Odysseus for the rest of the Odyssey. The poet now tells us of Odysseus' journey to Scheria and his sojourn there; and he makes Odysseus himself recount to the Phaiakians his previous wanderings (The Great Wanderings). They then convey him to Ithaka, and with his homecoming the tale of the wanderings of Odysseus joins on to the tale of Odysseus on Ithaka. Thus in two respects the narrative order of the poem disagrees with the chronological order of the story. The early and chief wanderings of Odysseus are told by throwback narrative toward the middle of the poem; and the wanderings of Telemachos come first. The joins or

transitions from theme to theme are noteworthy. After the poet has located Odysseus in time and space, the gods consider the question. Athene urges the homecoming of Odysseus. Zeus proclaims that Athene shall have her way; Odysseus may now start for home. Athene answers (i.81-95) Son of Kronos, our father, O lordliest of the mighty, if in truth this is pleasing to the blessed immortals, that Odysseus of the many designs shall return home, then let us dispatch Hermes, the guide, the slayer of Argos, to the island of Ogygia, so that with all speed he may announce to the lovely-haired nymph our absolute purpose, the homecoming of enduring Odysseus, that he shall come back. But I shall make my way to Ithaka, so that I may stir up his son a little, and put some confidence in him to summon into assembly the flowing-haired Achaians, and make a statement to all the suitors, who now forever slaughter his crowding sheep and lumbering horn-curved cattle; and I will convey him into Sparta and to sandy Pylos to ask after his dear father's homecoming, if he can hear something, and so that among people he may win a good reputation. This excellently motivates the Telemachy but it does perforce leave Odysseus stranded, and after the major part of the Telemachy, at the opening of Book v, the return to Odysseus shows more strain than the departure from him did. Athene has been to Ithaka, and to Pylos with Telemachos. She left the court of Nestor, presumably for Olympos (iii.371). Now she has to start all over again, almost as if the case of Odysseus had never come up, to complain of his sorrows; but ends with the perils of Telemachos; and Zeus seems to have to remind her that she herself planned everything that has just been happening (v.23). Hermes, who has been waiting for this for four books and five days, can at last get off (i.84; v.28) and the wanderings of Odysseus may be resumed. The obviousness of the joins and the bulk of material not specifically related to Odysseus in

Books iii-iv, his absence from Books i-ii, have suggested that the Telemachy was an independent poem which was, at some stage, incorporated more or less whole in the Odyssey. 2 This may be true, and there is no way to prove that it is not true. But it is also possible that the poet (or poets) 3 of the Odyssey, in the form in which we have it, deliberately developed this diversion, never meaning to take up Odysseus until he had first established Telemachos; that he so much desired to do this that he was willing to accept the necessary awkwardnesses of narrative joining in which it would involve him. Why so? Let us consider the effects gained for the total poem from having the Telemachy with its present contents in its present place. Odysseus in the Iliad was a great man, but his magnitude is increased by the flattering mentions of him by Nestor (iii.120-123), Menelaos (iv.333-346), and Athene herself (i.255-256 with 265-266). It is increased still more by the evident need for him felt by his family and friends, concisely stated by Athene (i.253- 254): “How great your need is now of the absent Odysseus,” and everywhere apparent. Through Nestor and Menelaos, also, the Odyssey is secured in its place among the Nostoi, 4 the homecomings of the Achaians. The general character of the Nostoi is succinctly stated by Nestor (iii.130-135) But after we had sacked the sheer citadel of Priam, and were going away in our ships, and the god scattered the Achaians, then Zeus in his mind devised a sorry homecoming for the Argives, since not all were considerate and righteous; therefore many of them found a bad way home, because of the ruinous anger of the Gray-eyed One, whose father is mighty. The sufferings of two great heroes, by long wandering away from home (Menelaos) and by treachery and disaster on arrival (Agamemnon), both well point up the case of Odysseus in two of its different aspects. For an audience well versed in the tale of Troy, or the Iliad, interest is added in a second viewing of

some old favorites: Nestor, Helen, Menelaos, all very like themselves in the Iliad. Without planning some such excursus as the Telemachy, the poet could not have worked them in without a great deal more awkwardness than it has, in fact, cost him. Another point gained through the Telemachy is the instigation to murder. For Odysseus must end by murdering Penelope's suitors. So, it appears, the story demanded. Further, the story demanded, or the poet firmly intended, that Telemachos should assist his father in this business. The suitors are a bad lot and they have put themselves in the wrong, but we cannot assume that Homer's audience was so inured to bloodshed that they could take this altogether lightly (modern readers mostly cannot). In any case, there are numerous passages in the Telemachy which look as if they might be designed, which do in any case serve, to shore up the consciences of the avenging heroes and of their sympathizers in the story or in the audience. Aigisthos seduced Agamemnon's wife while he was gone at Troy and murdered him on his return. Orestes murdered his father's murderer. The case may not seem quite parallel to the situation of the Odyssey, but Agamemnon's ghost used his story as a warning against the wife's-suitor danger (xi.441-446; 454-456); and when Athene tells Odysseus about Penelope and her suitors he immediately thinks of Agamemnon (xiii.383-385). Orestes' act seems to be taken as a precedent justifying murder when it means putting one's house in order. It is mentioned with approval by Zeus (i.35-43), and Athene specifically holds up Orestes as an example to Telemachos (i.298-300). Nestor tells Telemachos of Orestes' revenge, and immediately warns Telemachos not to stay too long away from home—once again, as if there were a specific connection (iii.306-316). It is not only through her praise of Orestes that Athene shows, at the very outset of the Odyssey, that she favors, one might even say

insists on, the slaughter of the suitors. She definitely tells Telemachos to do it (i.294-296). And in order that they may be the more guilty, she has apparently put the plot of ambushing Telemachos into their minds, while at the same time making sure that it must fail (v.23-24). The whole later action of the Odyssey is approved, authorized, encouraged by Athene. She is carefully established in this role at the outset of the epic as we have it. This, I believe, is the chief reason why we start with the Telemachy. Here she can be cast as the fairy godmother, or guardian spirit. If the poet had begun at the beginning of the wanderings of Odysseus, he could not have cast her in this role, because the tradition was that at this time Athene was angry with all the Achaians, including even Odysseus. So, for instance, Phemios sang of (i.326- 327) the Achaians' bitter homecoming from Troy, which Pallas Athene had inflicted upon them. Nestor agrees, adding the wrath of Zeus (iii.130-135 quoted above). The wrath of Athene deserves special consideration, and I shall return to it when I discuss the wanderings of Odysseus. Here it may be sufficient to say that the poet has established the position of Athene, as guardian spirit of the family, by beginning with the Telemachy. Last of all, and most obvious of all, the Telemachy gives us Telemachos. Once Odysseus is on the scene, our attention is mainly fixed on him, but his young helper quietly maintains the character that has been built up for him, without strain or hurry, in the first four books. I think, then, that it can be said, as objectively as is possible in such cases, that the Odyssey gains much from its Telemachy. The cost is the delay in bringing us, first-hand, to Odysseus and his wanderings. But did Homer count such delay as cost? In the Odyssey, the poet gives us a few indications of his views about storytelling. One should not be repetitive, xii.450-453: Why tell the rest of this story again, since yesterday in your house I told it to you and your majestic wife?

It is hateful to me to tell a story over again, when it has been well told. And well has Odysseus (Homer, that is) told his story. Thus Alkinoös, xi.366- 368: You have a grace upon your words, and there is sound sense within them, and expertly, as a singer would do, you have told the story. It is storytelling they like, and they are not impatient, xi.372-376: Here is a night that is very long, it is endless. It is not time yet to sleep in the palace. But go on telling your wonderful story. I myself could hold out until the bright dawn, if only you could bear to tell me, here in the palace, of your sufferings. “If you could only hear him,” says Eumaios to Penelope. “I had him for three nights, and he enchanted me” (xvii.512-521). Delay, excursus, elaboration—whether by creative expansion or incorporation of by-material—is part of the technique of the epic, as opposed to chronicle. In the Iliad, the wrath of Achilleus is not hastened to its fulfillment; nor, in the Odyssey, the vengeance of Odysseus. Consider the daydream of Telemachos, how he visualizes his father's homecoming, i.115-116: imagining in his mind his great father, how he might come back and all throughout the house might cause the suitors to scatter. All he has to do is appear, armed, and the suitors will scatter in panic. So too Athene, i.255-256; 265-266: I wish he could come now to stand in the outer doorway of his house, wearing a helmet and carrying shield and two spears…. I wish that such an Odysseus would come now among the suitors. They all would find death was quick, and marriage a painful matter. 5 Over too quickly, a tableau, not a story. How different is the actual return and slow-plotted slaying, directed by Athene herself. Delaying matter, if worthy, was, I think, welcome. THE WANDERINGS OF ODYSSEUS The wanderings themselves can be considered under four headings, as follows. a. The Wanderings as part of the Nostoi, or general homecoming of the Achaians. b. The Great Wanderings, from Troy to Kalypso's isle,

recounted to the Phaiakians by Odysseus himself, Books ix-xii. c. The Homecoming, from Kalypso's isle to Ithaka, including the stay with the Phaiakians. This is told by the poet as narrator, not by Odysseus, and occupies Books v-viii, and xiii.1-187, being interrupted by Odysseus' account of the Great Wanderings. d. The lying stories told by Odysseus when he is disguised as a tramp pretending to be a fallen noble; together with some information which Odysseus as tramp claims to have heard about the true Odysseus. a. The Wanderings of Odysseus are placed among the general homecomings, or Nostoi (the subject of a later epic) at the very outset, i.11-14: Then all the others, as many as fled sheer destruction, were at home now, having escaped the sea and the fighting. This one alone, longing for his wife and his homecoming, was detained by the queenly nymph Kalypso, bright among goddesses. Elsewhere in the first four books we have scattered allusions to the homecomings. They are generally characterized by Nestor's speech, iii.130-135: But after we had sacked the sheer citadel of Priam, and were going away in our ships, and the god scattered the Achaians, then Zeus in his mind devised a sorry homecoming for the Argives, since not all were considerate nor righteous; therefore many of them found a bad way home, because of the ruinous anger of the Gray-eyed One, whose father is mighty. We are told of the murder of Agamemnon, the wreck and drowning of Aias Oïleus, the storm battering and wanderings of Menelaos. Yet there is sometimes an odd note of inconsistency. Nestor reports that he and Diomedes came home without mishap, and that he has heard that Neoptolemos, Philoktetes, and Idomeneus did the same. 6 Proteus tells Menelaos that only two chiefs perished in the homecoming (iv.496-497). This does not square very well with the “sorry homecoming” spoken of by Nestor and mentioned elsewhere, nor does Nestor's account of the departure of Odysseus agree

well with Odysseus' own account. 7 It is possible that there was an early variant version of the Nostoi. b. and c. The Great Wanderings, starting from Troy, take Odysseus to the Kikonians, the Lotus-Eaters, the Cyclopes, Aiolos, the Laistrygones, Circe's isle, the Land of the Dead, the Sirens, Skylla and Charybdis, Thrinakia, and Kalypso's isle. From the Kikonians he is driven south, off the map, and his last certainly identifiable landmark is Kythera (ix.81). After that, except for a brief sight of Ithaka (x.28-55), he wanders among marvels, and though his seas and landfalls have often been identified, all is hypothetical and nothing is secure. Through these adventures, partly perhaps because Odysseus is telling them in his own person, the major gods appear very little. Athene does not appear at all. Responsibility for the troubled wanderings is pinned on Poseidon through the prayer of Polyphemos, his son, after his blinding (ix.528-536). Here, as we have noted, the order in the epic narrative does not follow the chronological order. The invocation and the opening scene, before leading to the Telemachy, establishes Poseidon as the persecutor of Odysseus, i.68-79 (Zeus speaking): It is the earth encircler Poseidon who, ever relentless, nurses a grudge because of the Cyclops, whose eye he blinded; for Polyphemos like a god, whose power is greatest over all the Cyclopes. Thoösa, a nymph, was his mother, and she is daughter of Phorkys, lord of the barren salt water, who in the hollows of the caves had lain with Poseidon. For his sake Poseidon, shaker of the earth, although he does not kill Odysseus, yet drives him back from the land of his fathers. But come, let all of us who are here work out his homecoming, and see to it that he returns. Poseidon shall put away his anger; for all alone and against the will of the other immortal gods united he can accomplish nothing. Poseidon is Odysseus' persecutor, just as Athene is firmly established as his protector (i.48-62). The Telemachy follows,

and then the Homecoming, which as we have seen starts with Athene taking up the case of Odysseus. She helps him against Poseidon, who wrecks his raft and who proposes to take a final revenge on the Phaiakians for conveying him home. It looks like contrivance; at least, the result is to mitigate any tradition that the sufferings of Odysseus and the other Achaians were due to the wrath of Athene. The hallmark of the wanderings, from Troy to home, is imaginative combination. Except for the very beginning, known places do not figure; nor traditional characters, except in the Land of the Dead. The gods of Olympos, I have said, are not prominent. Rather, we see much of minor divinities, ill-attested outside of the Odyssey itself, such as Circe and Kalypso. We find monsters like Skylla and Charybdis, and the delightful but almost equally monstrous Sirens. We have mortals who are almost superhuman in one dimension or another. The LotusEaters offer magic fruit (ix.92-97). The Phaiakians have their magic ships (viii.555-563), they may even have automatons (vii.91-94; 100-102), 8 their orchards bear fruit forever in season and out (vii.114-126), and the gods, who live near them, visit them openly without disguise (vii.201-206). The Laistrygones have supernatural strength and ferocity (x.116-124), and the normal seasons do not seem to apply in their country. Consider also Aiolos. He lives a blissful life in a brazen tower with his six sons married to his six daughters (x.1-2) and, in flat contradiction to epic tradition elsewhere, he, a mortal, has been put by Zeus in charge of all the winds, whom he keeps tied up in a bag. So, too, the Cyclopes of the Odyssey are quite different from the Cyclopes in Hesiod and elsewhere. Elsewhere they are gods; in the Odyssey they are mortals. Elsewhere there are three of them, and their names are Brontes, Steropes, and Arges; in the Odyssey they are apparently numerous, and one of them is named Polyphemos; this Polyphemos is the son of Poseidon,

but elsewhere the Cyclopes are the sons of Ouranos and Gaia. Elsewhere they are smiths and builders, but in the Odyssey they are herdsmen, or at least Polyphemos is. Their chief and perhaps sole similarity is the single eye, and the name of Cyclops. 9 Now Cyclops (Kyklops) means not “one-eyed” but “round-eyed.” Thus Hesiod, not content with the name, describes them as being not merely roundeyed but one-eyed, Theogony 142-145: These in all the rest of their shape were made like gods, but they had only one eye set in the middle of their foreheads. Kyklopes, Wheel-eyed, was the name given them, by reason of the single wheel-shaped eye that was set in their foreheads. Homer, on the other hand, while describing their nature and way of life, never tells us that they are one-eyed, but seems rather to assume that Polyphemos is one-eyed, or rather that we know he is. This comes up when Odysseus proposes to blind him, ix.331-333: Next I told the rest of the men to cast lots, to find out which of them must endure with me to take up the great beam and spin it in Cyclops' eye when sweet sleep had come over him. The blinding scene which follows assumes throughout that there is only one eye to deal with. This suggests to me that Homer “borrowed” the name and the notion of Cyclops for his story and that the name Cyclops by now “meant,” that is implied, a one-eyed giant. The story itself may have been a previous folk tale, since it has many analogies; 10 or it may have been free invention. Be that as it may, the story of the blinding of Polyphemos the Cyclops as we have it brings Poseidon into the story. His prayer to his father (ix.526-536) causes the troubled wanderings of Odysseus, as we were told at the start (i.68-75) and elsewhere. But Odysseus at the time of the blinding was already lost from home; his wanderings were begun before they were caused. The paradox seems most plausibly explained as a compromise. Homer knew and admitted the wrath of Athene (and Zeus and

other gods) 11 which caused suffering to the Achaians, including Odysseus. But he alters it as far as he can to a situation where Athene merely acquiesces in the sufferings of Odysseus out of respect for Poseidon, whose wrath is thus emphasized. On Ithaka, Odysseus gently complains to Athene that, while he enjoyed her patronage at Troy and among the Phaiakians, he did miss her company in between, that is, on the Great Wanderings (xiii.314-323). She ultimately answers this, xiii.339-343: And I never did have any doubt, but in my heart always knew how you would come home, having lost all of your companions. But, you see, I did not want to fight with my father's brother, Poseidon, who was holding a grudge against you in his heart, and because you blinded his dear son, hated you. Perhaps this will stand as Athene's official version. d. In addition to the authentic wanderings of Odysseus recounted by the hero himself or by the poet, there are five false stories told by the hero about himself. These are addressed respectively to Athene (xiii.256-286), Eumaios (xiv.191- 359), the suitors (xvii.419-444), Penelope (xix. 165-202), and Laertes (xxiv.302- 308). All the stories serve as answers to the standard question, spoken or unspoken, raised by the presence of a stranger (especially on an island): “Who are you and where do you come from?” All the stories involve known and identifiable places. They are meant to be plausible, and the supernatural and the marvelous elements of the wanderings find no place here. The longest and fullest account is the second, given to Eumaios. Here Odysseus represents himself as a Cretan, a veteran of the Trojan War, who subsequently led a disastrous raid on Egypt, was spared and befriended by the Egyptian King, survived the wreck of a Phoenician ship, and came to Ithaka by way of Thesprotia. The first, third, and fourth accounts vary or repeat these themes. All the first four necessarily represent Odysseus as a former

nobleman down on his luck. By the time he talks to Laertes, however, he has recovered his property and status, and the story of the fallen noble is no longer necessary. He is from Alybas, wherever that may be, and has arrived from Sikania, presumably Sicily. The story of the raid on Egypt has attracted special attention. It reads like an account of one of the great raids by the Peoples of the Sea, attested in the annals of Egypt, but told here from the invaders' point of view. 12 This would tie the Homeric poems to history, and suggest that the tradition of troubled homecomings for the Achaians might have originated in actual turbulence and wanderings after the Trojan War. The presence of these stories in the final version of the Odyssey could perhaps be accounted for by the poet's desire to exploit and develop the talents of his hero, giving content to the general comment, xix.203: He knew how to say many false things that were like true sayings. But it is also possible that the lying stories, taken together, might represent a fragmentary outline of an original Odyssey, in which the wanderings were confined to known places in the Mediterranean: Crete, Cyprus, Egypt, Phoenicia, Thesprotia; and which the present Odyssey has replaced. One could thus make up a rough and imperfect series of analogies, such as, for instance: Raid on Egypt Great Wanderings Egyptian counterattack Laistrygones King of Egypt Circe or Kalypso Phoenician wreck Wreck of Odysseus' last ship or of the raft Thesprotia Scheria, the land of the Phaiakians: Nothing like this can, of course, be pressed, but the lying stories in themselves emphasize the element of imagination in the Odyssey as we have it. By contrast to the Great Wanderings, the lying stories link rather to the Nostoi. THE WORLD OF THE WANDERINGS The world of the Wanderings has occasioned even more controversy. Briefly, there are two extreme views. On the one, the places in the Wanderings, such as the land of the Lotus-Eaters, Circe's Isle,

Scheria, and so forth, represent real places in the Mediterranean, or even out of it; or at least some of them do. On the other view, they are imaginary. Both these views seem indeed to be extreme, but it is difficult to find a middle ground. Many identifications have been made, and the whole subject is too large and complicated to treat in detail. 13 It may be useful to look at a few favorite identifications. The Lotus-Eaters are regularly located on the coast of Libya (Africa), because of the sailing log, though Homer, who knows of Libya, does not use the name here. There is a strong tradition that places Polyphemos and the Cyclopes in Sicily. Skylla and Charybdis have often, despite many objections, been located in the Straits of Messina. Korkyra (now often called Corfu) claimed to be Scheria, the land of the Phaiakians. Some of these traditions are early. Thucydides, writing at the end of the fifth century B.C., refers to legends about Cyclopes, and also Laistrygones, in Sicily, and to the Korkyraians' pride in the ancient sea fame of the Phaiakians. 14 Also, the traditions have survived, or have been resuscitated, and to this day near Acireale the Sicilians will show you the rocks Polyphemos threw at the ship of Odysseus, 15 while at Corfu your guide will point out the little island which is the Phaiakian ship turned to stone, and the bay where Odysseus encountered Nausikaa. 16 Yet there are serious difficulties. Nothing in the text of the Odyssey indicates that the Cyclopes lived in Sicily or, in fact, on an island at all. Phaiakian Scheria does seem to be an island, far out in the sea with no land near. Corfu is an island, but lies so close off the mainland that from the open sea, whence Odysseus approached it, and even from some places on the landward side, it is impossible to tell where the mainland ends and the island begins, or even that Corfu is an island at all. Yet as Odysseus first sees it (v.281) it looked like a shield lying on the misty face of the water. External evidence raises still greater

difficulties. The Odyssey substantially as we have it could not have been completed much before the end of the eighth century B.C. The traditional foundation dates for many Greek cities in the West are earlier than that. Sicilian Naxos is said to have been settled in 735 B.C., Syracuse and Korkyra in 734, and half a dozen others before 700; Kyme (Cumae), near Naples, claims even greater age. These dates are generally accepted by modern scholars, and the pottery in some places even goes back to Mycenaean times. 17 Thus, by the time of the Odyssey's completion, the western Mediterranean as far as Sicily was not only well explored, but pretty well settled with Greek colonies, colonies almost or quite as Hellenic as their mother cities in old Greece. How could such a place belong simultaneously to the known world and the wonder world of the Wanderings? How could Korkyra be both itself and Scheria? Only, one might say, by embedding features conceived very early in the process of accumulation, and ignoring later phases. This does not seem to be the normal process. Homer's Ithaka is Ithaka, not a wonderland. Sicily as Sikania is mentioned as if it were a real place (xxiv.307); the land of the Sikels (presumably Sicilians) is a source or market for slaves, not Cyclopes or other monsters (xx.383; xxiv.211; 365; 389). Menelaos speaks of Libya among other far but real places, iv.83-85: I wandered to Cyprus and Phoenicia, to the Egyptians, I reached the Aithiopians, Eremboi, Sidonians, and Libya. The place is preternaturally prosperous, but it keeps company with Cyprus, Phoenicia, Egypt, and Ethiopia, not with the Lotus-Eaters, and a relatively workaday Phoenician ship was carrying Odysseus there to be sold as a slave (xiv.295-297). Those who would find true points of reference for Aiolos, the Phaiakians, Laistrygones, and the rest frequently offer the support of topographical detail from the Homeric text. Sometimes this is too general for identification, but often it is

plausible. The little island off the land of the Cyclopes is described in thoughtful detail, as if seen by the eye of a prospective settler (ix.116-169); but where is it? The land of the Laistrygones is vividly presented; we can still ask the same question. In these and other cases, the descriptions may well be based on authentic reports from mariners. But they also may be put in the wrong place. That is, to say it another way, for this is important, it is possible to combine topographical accuracy with geographical incoherence. This seems actually to have happened in the case of Ithaka. Topographical details are scattered through the poem. The scholar can review these and honestly say that Homer seems to know his Ithaka, and what it is like. 18 Only he does not seem to know where it is. Listen to Odysseus himself, who ought to know, ix.21-26: I am at home in sunny Ithaka. There is a mountain there that stands tall, leaf-trembling Neritos, and there are islands settled around it, lying one very close to another. There is Doulichion and Same, wooded Zakynthos, but my island lies low and away, last of all on the water toward the dark, with the rest below facing east and sunshine. This simply will not do for Ithaka (Thiaki), though that has the landmarks, for it lies tucked close in against the eastern side of the far larger Kephallenia (Same?). Homer's description would in fact better suit Corfu (Korkyra), which all the world has already identified with Phaiakian Scheria. I am thus forced back to the belief that the places of the Wanderings are combinations. They are made by the imagination. They are in part sheer fancy; and sailors' stories can involve monsters and enchanted places, as well as authentic report. But they probably contain bits and pieces of solid unassimilated fact. The lands of the Wanderings seem to stand on the same footing as their inhabitants. These too are of this world and stature, rather than that of Olympos and the Olympians. Yet they are not quite of this world either. They are people endowed

like no people we shall ever meet, and live in places where no one, since Odysseus, will ever go. 19 And thus the Land of the Dead, where Odyssesus and his men (so soon to die) are the only living visitors, takes its natural place among the Wanderings. For it is described not as an underworld but as a far shore, with landmarks borrowed (perhaps) from some or several true places in the real world. If the Odyssey is a work of the imagination, then, we must ask, are the Wanderings symbolic or allegorical? Do they represent the story not of a man but of Man? Many have thought so. 20 I think not. But the Wanderings do lend themselves to a morality, for it is easy to read the adventures as a series of trials. The Greek authors liked to dramatize the test (peira) by which a person established his quality. Odysseus passes or at least survives the trials by terror and force: the Kikonians, the Cyclops, the Laistrygones, the confrontation with the ghosts, Skylla, Charybdis, Zeus' storm, Poseidon's storm. And there is trial by temptation. His men fail disastrously against curiosity and hunger with the Bag of Winds and the Cattle of the Sun, but Odysseus endures, and he endures also against the temptations to stay with comfort and beauty and give up the hard voyage home: the charms of the Lotus-Eaters, Circe, the Sirens, Kalypso, Nausikaa. But symbolism and allegory seem foreign to the biology of early Greek epic; it is hard for me to think that the moral proposition came first, with the story shaped to present it. Even in the case of Circe turning the men to swine, it is probably mistaken to read anything more meaningful than a fairy-tale transformation. There is plenty of morality in the Odyssey, but it is where it ought to be, inextricably implicit in the story itself. This is a brilliant series of adventures linked and fused by character. The tests (including the tests on Ithaka) are passed by the exercise of virtues, viz. (in ascending order) physical courage and strength; ingenuity

where these might fail; restraint, patience, tact, and self-control; and the will for home. These are the virtues not of Man, but of a particular valiant, resourceful, much-enduring hero, established as such in the Iliad, and developed in a development of the Nostoi, the sequel to the Iliad. ODYSSEUS ON ITHAKA In the middle of a line, xiii.187, we leave the Phaiakians forever, without even learning what finally happened to them, and henceforth we are concerned almost exclusively with Odysseus on Ithaka. He will not attack the suitors until Book xxii, and he will not reveal himself to Penelope until Book xxiii. Thus the length allotted to Odysseus on Ithaka is extraordinary. Nearly nine books, more than twice the text given to the Great Wanderings, are devoted to the time from Odysseus' arrival to his dropping of disguise and attack on the suitors, and for nearly nine books very little happens. We can only guess at the purpose of this drawing-out. We may observe some of the effects. The revelations and recognitions, by Telemachos, Eumaios and Philoitios, Penelope, Laertes, are strung out bit by bit. We are teased by the abortive recognitions by Argos and Eurykleia, and by the times when the careful hero nearly gives himself and the game away (xviii.90-94; xx.28-30). There is the constant threat that Penelope will, at the very last moment, give in to the suitors (xix. 524-534; 576-581; xxi. 68-79). There arises that special irony where the audience or reader, in on the whole secret, can watch the victims being gulled by the hero, his merciless guarding divinity, and his equally merciless son. The story of near-recognition is beautifully played out in the interview between the hero and his wife, where she confides in the stranger to whom she is so drawn that she can hardly let him go (xix.509). Here and elsewhere, the leisurely composition, in which talk is overwhelmingly predominant, gives opportunity to elaborate the characters. The epithets of the three leading persons —resourceful Odysseus, thoughtful

Telemachos, and circumspect Penelope— gain depth and intensity through these slow books. Penelope, in particular, is done with great subtlety. Desperately pressed, with no power but her wits, charm, and heart, she plays a waiting game and never commits herself. The leading suitors, Antinoös, Eurymachos, and Amphinomos, also gain some dimension. Both as a group and as individuals, in a few cases, the suitors could have been much simpler than they are. For the poet seems mostly to have seen the moral issue as just right against wrong. 21 The sin of the faithless maids and of the one faithless thrall is disloyalty. The sin of the suitors is perhaps this, too, but they also abuse hospitality. To Homer, perhaps because he was a wandering poet, this virtue is thematic, and again and again we are given object lessons on the right dealings between host and guest, through the conduct of Telemachos, Nestor and his family, Menelaos and a reformed Helen, the Phaiakians, Odysseus, Kalypso, Penelope. Horrid counter-examples are furnished by Polyphemos and the Laistrygones. The suitors are aware of the principle (xvii.481-487) but in action they are a living travesty of all proper custom. Thus they lose all divine favor. Not even an Olympian god is so prejudiced as to take their part. Yet they are no indiscriminate group of villains, nor are they all villains. They are said to be plotting the murder of Telemachos but, once he has slipped past them, they seem irresolute about it (xvi.371-406). They appear to be more an intolerable nuisance than an actual menace. They have some moral notions and some sense of decency (xvi.400-406; xvii. 365-368; 481-487). While indirectly offending the gods by their treatment of people, they respect the gods and regularly observe the forms of religion. This, and their occasional kindnesses, do them no good (xvii. 363-364). Odysseus tries to warn the best of them, but Athene has no mercy (xviii.124-157). Their doom seems

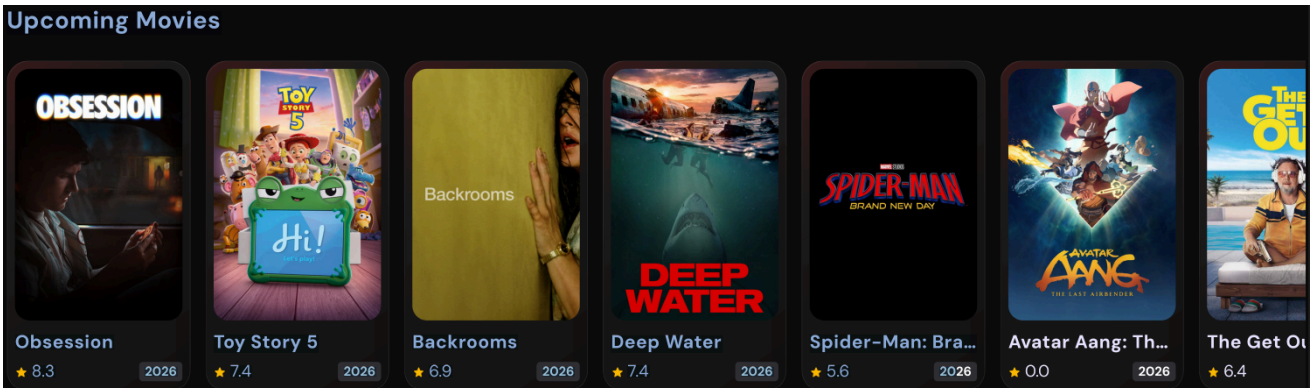
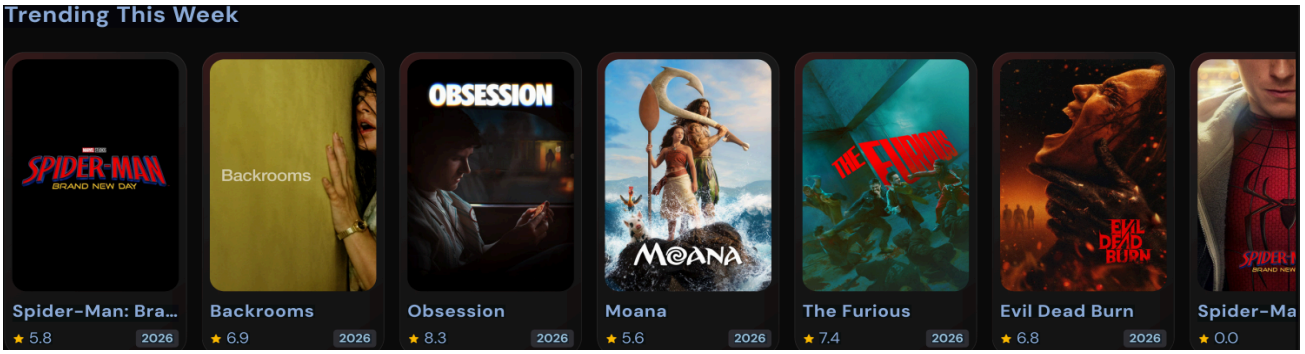
excessive to me. I do not know how it seemed to Homer. But Penelope cried over her pet geese (xix.535-558), and Homer may have conceived some liking for his own creatures, and put off, as long as he could, their necessary slaughter. THE END OF THE ODYSSEY After the killing of the suitors and the reunion of Penelope and Odysseus, the end of the Odyssey reads like a hurried composition. The purpose of the second visit to the dead is not altogether clear. It does, however, in some sense dispose of the suitors, whose bodies were for some time lying about the palace (they are finally buried, xxiv.417); and it does link the Ithakan episode with the background of the Trojan War, in a manner not uncongenial to the poet of the eleventh book, if this is he. On the other hand, the previous narrative demands a reunion with Laertes, and it certainly demands some kind of patch-up of the chaotic situation in Ithaka, where “all the best young men” (i.245) are lying dead. A reconciliation is scrambled together by a hasty and inadequate deus ex machina, which ends the epic. The hand has lost its firmness, 22 but who can say for sure that the hand is not Homer's? THE ODYSSEY AND THE ILIAD This brings us to the question of unity, which cannot be solved but must be faced. For the Odyssey, as previously for the Iliad, I have been writing as if on the assumption of a single master hand or, in Kirk's phrase, monumental poet. 23 Only a study devoted to disintegration would proceed otherwise. Such unity cannot be proved, though the burden of proof is on the analysts rather than on the unitarians. Such unity also, if it exists, is qualified by the conditions of oral poetry, namely, the accumulation of saga material (less for the Odyssey than for the Iliad), and of formulaic language. If there was such a monumental poet for the Odyssey, and a monumental poet for the Iliad, were they the same man? I can only say as I have said before: that this cannot be proved; but that, if someone not

Homer composed the Odyssey, nobody had a name to give him; and that the burden of proof rests on those who would establish separate authorship. Still, it is well to note some of the similarities and differences in the two poems. The Odyssey, like the Iliad, ignores historical developments between the time of the originating events and the time of composition. In the Odyssey, as in the Iliad, this principle is violated by occasional slips, the so-called anachronisms. The Odyssey adds a few of its own: Sicilians, Phoenicians in the western seas, Dorians in Crete, consultation of oracles. Little can be proved by this. The important anachronisms are deeper and harder to assess. How far, for instance, does the picture of Ithaka reflect life in a Mycenaean palace, and how much does it reflect life in a baronial house of the poet's own day, centuries later? The Odyssey seems later than the Iliad principally because it assumes the existence of the Iliad, or at least of a fully told tale of Troy. That does not mean it must be so much later that we require a separate author. It is a coherent sequel to the Iliad and does not contradict it. Consider the characters who are carried over from one epic to the other. Judgment of characterization is admittedly a subjective business. For what my opinion is worth, I would say that Odysseus, Nestor, Agamemnon, Menelaos, Helen, and Achilleus are the same “people” in both poems. 24 Those qualities which mark the Odysseus of the Odyssey—strength and courage, ingenuity, patience and self-control—all characterize the same hero in the Iliad. His friendship with the Atreidae and Nestor, suggested in the Iliad, is still more notable in the Odyssey. And in the Iliad his determination to win the war matches his determination to win the homecoming in the Odyssey. To achieve both ends, he is ruthless. Nestor in his garrulity, Agamemnon in his self-pity, Menelaos in his courtesy and strong moral sense, Achilleus in his devotion to the ideal of the warrior, all repeat striking

characteristics of the persons in the Iliad. And Helen is as self-centered as ever; in neither epic can she make a speech without talking about herself. All this, if it is allowed, does not of course prove a single poet for the two poems. It could mean no more than that whoever composed the Odyssey knew his Iliad well. But here we come upon a striking fact. When the Odyssey recounts episodes from the tale of Troy, these episodes are never a part of the Iliad, but seem to fall outside, either before or after, the action of the Iliad. Thus, apart from the Returns or Nostoi, we hear of the following: The Trojan Horse and the final battle for Troy, iv.271-289; viii.499- 520; xi.523-537. Odysseus' spying expedition in Troy, iv.240-264 (rather than his spying expedition with Diomedes, Iliad X.254-578). His wrestling match with Philomeleïdes of Lesbos, iv.341-344 (rather than with Aias, Iliad XXIII.707-737). His fight in defense of the body of Achilleus, v.308-310 (rather than his fight alone against the Trojans when the other Achaians had fled, Iliad XI.401-488). The quarrel of Odysseus and Achilleus, viii.75-82 (rather than that of Agamemnon and Achilleus, Iliad I.1-305). The death and burial of Achilleus, xxiv.35-94 (rather than the death and burial of Patroklos). The quarrel of Odysseus and Aias over the armor of Achilleus, xi.541-564. The death of Antilochos, iv.187-188; 199-202. The exploits or excellences of heroes who reached Troy after the action of the Iliad was over, such as Neoptolemos, Eurypylos, and Memnon, xi.505-537, and Philoktetes, viii.219. The recruiting of the heroes, xxiv.114-119. The exclusion of Iliadic episodes from the Odyssey can scarcely be accidental. We are left, as I see it, to choose between two conclusions. Either the poet of the Odyssey was ignorant of the Iliad; 25 or he deliberately avoided trespassing on the earlier poem. I cannot believe in the first alternative, and am forced to choose the second. What are the other important differences between the two poems? Every Homeric scholar

has his own list, and I must be brief. To me, the main differences are details of the whole general style of narrative. The Odyssey concentrates on relatively small groups. Without nations embattled, the Olympians of the Iliad are less needed, and the first-person narrative of the Great Wanderings virtually excludes them. There are also a few important and wellknown differences in the concept of the divinities. Hermes, more of a magician than Iris, takes over her functions as messenger. Aphrodite, not Charis, is the wife of Hephaistos. Olympos turns into a never-never land (vi.41-47), strangely like the Elysian Field which is Menelaos' destination (iv.561-569), and well in accord with the Odyssey's wander-world of monsters and fairyland people. Invention in the Odyssey extends to name making; a list of young Phaiakians shows a dozen and a half names, all meaning something to do with seamanship and shipbuilding (viii.111-115). The little thumbnail sketches of slaughtered warriors in the Iliad have a more traditional sound; such sketches are rare in the Odyssey, where we do not deal in large masses. The poet of the Iliad shows much lyric imagination in his similes. The Odyssey is far poorer here, and much of the same material is used differently. Storms in the Iliad are used imaginatively in similes; there is no weather in the Iliad. 26 Storms in the Odyssey are something Odysseus must contend with. The humble workingman enters the Iliad only through simile, but in the Odyssey he is there in the flesh. When we come to language, rhythm, metrical phrasing, the overmastering impression is one of unity. If there were two (or more) poets, they were trained in the same tradition of formula. Agamemnon is hailed in the Iliad (II.434, etc.) as Son of Atreus, most lordly and king of men, Agamemnon, and so he is in the Odyssey when the occasion arises (xi.397). His answering address (xi.405), Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus, is common to both epics. So is the summons to

assembly (Iliad II.50-52; Odyssey ii.6-8), the introduction of a speaker (Iliad I.73, etc.; Odyssey ii.160, etc.), the course of ships through the water (Iliad I.481-483; Odyssey ii.427-429). In both epics, children are innocent, women are deep-girdled, iron is gray, ships are hollow, words are winged and go through the barrier of the teeth, the sea is wine-blue, barren, and salt, bronze is sharp and pitiless. The list is almost endless. Even the Ithakans are strong-greaved Achaians (Odyssey ii.72; xx.146), though they are not armed. The Odyssey has many phrases, journey formulae for instance, which are not found in the Iliad. 27 Naturally, the Iliad has many combat formulae which are missing from the Odyssey. But when combat finally ensues between Odysseus and the suitors, the poet repeats brief formulae and even sizable sequences (compare Iliad XV.479-481 and Odyssey xxii.122-124). Adaptation may be necessary. Amphinomos goes down, Odyssey xxii.94: He fell, thunderously, and took the earth full on his forehead. We cannot quite have the standard Iliad line: He fell, thunderously, and his armor clattered upon him. Amphinomos has no armor. Occasionally, a few lines from a combat in the Iliad can fit a context in the Odyssey which is not military. The language for the Cyclops' throwing a stone is the same as that used for Aias (Iliad VII.268-269; Odyssey ix.537-538). The death of Odysseus'steersman (xii.412-414) is neatly adapted from the death of Epikles on the wall (Iliad XII.384-386). Can the formula in a changed setting ever mean parody? Sarpedon advances on the wall of the Achaians like a lion against a guarded sheepfold (Iliad XII.299-301), and that is appropriate; but the same language is adapted to Odysseus' embarrassed advance on a group of frightened girls (Odyssey vi.130; 133-134). When Telemachos sneezes, the sneeze "clashed horribly" (Odyssey xvii.542); the phrase was used of the helmet of Hektor in battle (Iliad XV.648) and other warlike noises. Eumaios is called

orchamos andron, “leader of men” (xiv.121). This could mean “foreman (of swineherds),” which is what he is, but it suggests “commander of armies,” which is what it means in the Iliad. It has been suggested that the arrangement that “noble swineherd” made for his sows reflected those made by Priam for his daughters (Odyssey xiv.13-15; Iliad VI.244-246). There are other such combinations which, with enough good will, can be seen as parodies. It is hard to be sure, but such amusements with formula would be in accord with the generally lighter tone of the Odyssey. 28 Yet these very manipulations of metrical phrases attest a deep, intimate similarity of ear and verse building which can only be suggested here. We can illustrate by a short phrase taken almost at random: peri chroï, which means “next the skin” or “around the body,” and having the metrical scheme . It is used in a dozen otherwise quite different lines in the two poems. But it always comes in exactly the same place in the line, to form the line-end . This shows not merely the reuse of materials, but a constant habit of metrical thought. There is much that is obscure about the functions of a monumental poet. Within the limits of my ignorance, I can think of one Homer, composing, or completing, first the Iliad, then the Odyssey. Or I can think of an old master, called Homer, mainly responsible for the Iliad; and a young master, favored apprentice and poetic heir; perhaps a nephew or son-in-law; also going by the name, or assuming the name, of Homer; and mainly responsible for the Odyssey. I find the second combination more persuasive, but that is all I can say for it. NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION In my translation, I have followed the principles stated and followed in my translation of the Iliad. In particular, I have tried to follow, as far as the structure of English will allow, the formulaic practice of the original. Of course my memory has failed me at times and I have allowed myself some liberties. NOTE ON THE TEXT I

have used the Oxford text of T. W. Allen, 2nd edition, and followed it except in a very few places. At iv.515-521 I have followed Bothe's suggestion and transposed the lines; the numbers show the original order. In x.117, I read the singular nea, “the (i.e., my) ship” instead of plural neas, “ships,” which is in the manuscripts. The context shows that Odysseus, who sent the men, was separated from his main fleet. In xiii.158, I follow an ancient conjecture and read